Giant Retroperitoneal Fibrolipoma

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Abstract
Retroperitoneal fibrolipoma is an uncommon tumour. In retroperitoneal space, it can attain an enormous size. A giant retroperitoneal fibrolipoma, weighing 8 kg which was thought to be a malignant lesion pre-operatively, was removed completely from abdomen of a middle aged male patient. The tumour was benign in nature producing pressure symptoms only due to its enormous size. Myxomatous degeneration may occur in retroperitoneal lipoma when its complete removal becomes difficult.
Primary retroperitoneal tumours may originate from the retroperitoneal adipose, muscle, connective, lymphatic & nerve tissue, and also from the urogenital tract. Around 80% of retroperitoneal tumors are malignant and of these, liposarcoma is the most frequent histological type. Lymphomas occupy a great proportion among all retroperitoneal tumours. Although soft tissue sarcomas are more common among adults, retroperitoneal liposarcomas represent only 0.1% to 0.2% of all malignant neoplasms.

Keywords: Fibrolipoma

Introduction
Retroperitoneal fibrolipoma is a benign neoplasm of adult adipose tissue with presence of various percentage of fibrous tissue in retroperitoneal space. The tumour may be a malignant one. A low grade malignant tumour is difficult to differentiate from a benign tumour on investigations alone and needs careful histopathological examination and follow-up.1 Other tumours of retroperitoneal space are myofibroma, lymphomas, urogenital tract tumours, adrenal tumours and tumours arising from nervous tissues. Sarcomas are the most common retroperitoneal tumours.2

A benign retroperitoneal tumour like fibrolipoma can be easily enucleated but if myxomatous degeneration occurs in a retroperitoneal lipoma, it may be difficult to enucleate for its adherence with surrounding structures.

Careful histopathological examination of the resected specimen and long follow-up of the patient are necessary to predict long term outcome after opeation.

Case report
A 38 year old male patient of Naogaon district presented with a very large abdominal tumour in December, 2008.

Initially, it was a just noticeable lump in his left mid-abdomen which was gradually increasing in size for about 10 years and ultimately attained this enormous size. There was no abdominal pain. He did not complain of dyspepsia or alteration of bowel habit. He never had haematemesis, melaena or haematuria. He complained of ugly looking abdominal swelling and a sense of dragging discomfort on walking. He feels discomfort during work in squatting position.

He has no other complaints except occasional dysuria for about 1 year. Occasionally, he got upper abdominal discomfort in empty stomach.

He used to take drugs like H₂ blockers when upper abdominal discomfort increases in severity.

On examination, his abdomen was found distended by a tumour reaching from the pelvis to within 2 inch of the ensiform cartilage, rather more prominent below than above the umbilicus. It was roughly globular in shape, irregular on the surface, some of the projections being distinctly firmer than the general mass. There was no true
fluctuation, but in some places, a sense of
elasticity, like that of a small tense cyst was
detected. The whole tumour was dull on
percussion, a clear note was present above it, and
in the left flank.

His complete blood counts were within normal
limit. Urine examination was normal.

Ultrasonography of whole abdomen reported a
huge intra-abdominal tumour with uniform tissue
architecture. Right kidney & right ureter were
pushed above & to the left.

Intravenous urography showed right kidney &
ureter pushed up & to the left. No hydronephrosis
or hydrourerter were detected. X-ray chest & ECG
were normal. Serum creatinine level was within
normal limit. CT scan or MRI were not done for
very poor financial condition of the patient.

A decision was taken in consultation with the
anaesthesiologist for laparotomy to remove the
tumour. Abdomen was opened by a right upper
para-median incision, which was later extended
downwards encircling umbilicus.

A solid, yellowish, retroperitoneal tumour was
detected. The front and sides of the tumour were
covered by peritoneum.

The tumour was fully exposed by incising
peritoneum lateral to descending colon which was
then carefully stripped off the tumour. When this
had been done, the right ureter and right kidney
came into view, being embedded in a deep groove
on the inner and posterior aspect of the tumour
and were displaced to the left by the tumour. Right
ureter and right kidney were carefully separated
from the tumour. Left kidney and left ureter were
normal.

It was only at that time it was apparent that the
tumour started in right upper abdomen and
enlarged downwards and to the left, displacing
right kidney and right ureter to the left. More
swollen portion of the tumour was apparent in left
mid- abdomen and gave a false impression about
the left mid-abdominal position of the tumour. All
other abdominal & pelvic organs were found
normal.

The tumour was shelled very easily out of its bed
completely. Only two leashes of vessels required
ligation. The oozing from the large raw surface
left was checked by hot saline compress.

The cut edges of peritoneum were then sutured,
bringing the right colon and kidney into
approximately normal position, and the abdominal
wound closed with a drain at tumour enucleation
site in retroperitoneal space. The tumour weighed
8 kg on removal.

Post-operative period was uneventful. There was
very little collection from drainage tube which was
removed on 4th post-operative day. Skin sutures
were removed on 8th post-operative day and the
patient was discharged from the hospital on 10th
post-operative day.

On histopathological examination, the tumour
proved to be a lipoma with small fibrous areas,
and a fair amount of connective tissue with no
evidence of malignancy.

![Figure 1: The excised specimen on instrument trolley](image1)

![Figure 2: The excised specimen in a bowl](image2)
On post-operative follow-up, the patient was alright at 2 weeks, after 2 months and about 1½ years after the operation and is in good health with minimum skin scar. He can perform all normal activities and showed no evidence of recurrence.

**Discussion**

Lipomas are the most common benign tumors of the adipose tissue among adults. According to histopathological findings, they are subclassified into conventional lipoma, fibrolipoma, angiolipoma, fusiform cell lipoma, myxolipoma and pleomorphic lipoma. Retroperitoneal lipomas are extremely rare, slowly growing benign tumors of adipose tissue.

Microscopically, lipomas consist of multivacuolated cells, small eosinophilic cells and univacuolated adipocytes. Classical lipomas have CT and MRI signal characteristics similar to subcutaneous fat.

Magnetic resonance imaging will reveal an intense signal on T1-weighted images. Angiography for lipomas shows the tumors to be hypovascular. Although retroperitoneal lipomas are relatively more common in adults, they can occur in infants and small children. The tumour may affect both sexes, but there is a greater predisposition for females.

Differential histopathological diagnosis with liposarcoma may be problematic, especially for tumors with grade 1 malignancy, which are denominated lipoma-like. Pathological examination for mitotic activity, cellular atypia, necrosis, and invasion allows for a definitive diagnosis.

Almost all reported retroperitoneal tumors can be easily and completely resected, without any invasion of adjacent structures. Total excision is the treatment of choice.

**Conclusion**

Retroperitoneal fibrolipoma is a benign condition but may be malignant. Patients usually present with a huge abdominal swelling slowly growing over long period of time. A benign retroperitoneal tumour can be easily excised except in places where fatty tissues grow inside muscle fibres and needs care for complete removal. Myxomatous degeneration and malignancy are the situations where complete removal of the tumour may not be possible.

Effects of a benign tumour is usually for its size which may compress neighbouring organs and produce symptoms. In this case, though right kidney and right ureter were pushed above and to the left by the tumour, it did not hamper kidney function.

As the tumour was totally removed, the patient is free from recurrence till now.

**References**


